

THE MARYLAND MUSEUM OF FIRE

Entering the foyer, you notice first the hoses and then the ribbons in cases of glass and chrome. To the right is an entire wall devoted to commemorative plaques of famous fires of the past: The Laughing Hen Inn (1784), The Great Baltimore Fire (1904), The Shell Oil Refinery Explosion (1968). The rooms open from here in progression. The Equipment Room shows the development from wooden bucket to Hook & Ladder. The Uniform Room has some of the original helmet insignia designed by Margaret Hanley of Jacobsville. It is easy to see the importance of rubber and, later, of synthetic foams in the protection of the firemen. The Hall of Heroes has wax and plaster casts of all the firemen to perish in the line of duty along with their biography and several personal effects. The last room is rarely open to the public. Here the ladies of the Women's Auxiliary, who raised the money for this museum through bakesales and neighborhood carnivals, tend smoldering coals, keeping the fires, the really big fires, burning for their men. There are five exits at the Maryland Museum of Fire. It is open 9 to 5 every day but Monday. Smoking is not permitted.

PORTRAIT

He considers himself a donator,
Or, if you prefer, a donor.
It is the way he lives.

It started innocently enough,
First, a pint of blood
Then a kidney here, a retina there.

He doesn't ask for much:
Clean sheets, a hot lunch, car fare home;
These make him happy.

He sees life as a subtraction, a reduction.
Each year he wants to grow smaller
If only to pare another thumbnail, transplant
another hair.

He knows loss is a matter of adjustment.
He fondly recalls each body part discarded,
Each vital organ given away.

The pounds lost dieting,
The pancreas sent to Paraguay,
The larynx bestowed upon the mute soprano.

Now his eyes,
Without corneas, without retinas,
ask to give you something, anything

But don't ask for his heart.
He will give you anything,
Anything, that is, that he has left.

-- Peter Woolson

Ithaca NY

THINGS TO DO WITH A WOMAN: #2 THE LAUNDRY

You need two women for this.

After soaking your clothes
in biodegradable soap for 24 hrs.
find a nice stream
close to your back door:
make sure it's clear and cold.

Place the two women face-to-face
in the water.

Husk each one
naked to the waist and dunk them.
Give one your first load.

Be certain the water cascades
over their heads
that they resemble boulders.

While one sits idle her duds
clustered like kelp on her lap
the other proceeds to whang
her load over her partner's head.

When she's done the other
repeats the process all afternoon
until the job gets finished.

Before any of this feed them
eggplant and granola after give